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Report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixty-sixth executive session*

Geneva, 5–7 February 2018

* The present document is an advance version of the report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixty-sixth executive session, held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 5 to 7 February 2018. It will appear in final form, together with the reports on the sixty-fifth session (parts I and II) and the sixty-seventh executive session of the Board as *Official Records of the General Assembly, Seventy-third Session, Supplement No. 15* (A/73/15).

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Introduction

The sixty-sixth executive session of the Trade and Development Board was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, from 5 to 7 February 2018. The Vice-President (Thailand) of the Board chaired the session, acting on behalf of the President. In the course of the session, the Board held four plenary meetings.

I. Action by the Trade and Development Board

A. The Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access

Agreed conclusions 534 (EX-LXVI)

The Trade and Development Board,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", and in particular Sustainable Development Goal 17, which recognizes that the United Nations is one of many actors that can help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and that partnerships with Governments, the private sector, civil society and others are essential,

Recalling the role of UNCTAD as the focal point in the United Nations systems for the integrated treatment of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology, investment and sustainable development,

Noting the United Nations Secretary-General's report released on 30 June 2017, entitled "Repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all", which states "our shared objective is a United Nations that fully delivers on its mandates, with a focus on results and a culture of collaboration",[1]

Noting the UNCTAD report, *From Actions to Results: Implementation of the Nairobi Maafikiano in a Changing Environment*,[2] which "seeks to position UNCTAD by translating into practice the organization's strengths and advantages, including what differentiates it from, and allows it to complement, the work of other organizations",

Further noting that the global conference on Sustainable Development Goal 7 and the high-level political forum on sustainable development will be held, respectively, in Bangkok and New York, with a review of Goal 7,

1. *Welcomes* the UNCTAD *The Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access*,[3] and commends it for the quality of its analysis, the pertinence of its policy recommendations and the timeliness of the choice of its topic;

2. *Recognizes* that universal access to efficient and affordable energy remains a vital link to all dimensions of development; energy plays a key role in enabling the structural transformation of least developed country economies, which, in turn, is required for these countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; Goal 7 is therefore an enabler of several other Goals;

[1] A/72/124-E/2018/3.
[2] UNCTAD/2017/1.
[3] UNCTAD/LDC/2017.

3. *Acknowledges* the idea of transformational energy access, that is, access that ensures not only the basic needs of households, but also the quantitative and qualitative needs of productive and public uses and therefore allows for the structural transformation of economies; this type of access entails meeting producers' energy needs in terms of accessibility, scale, reliability, economic viability, affordability and efficiency; the analysis contained in the report provides a valuable guideline for policymakers;

4. *Concurs* with the idea that decisive progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 7 in the least developed countries requires establishing an energy-transformation nexus, whereby productive use of energy can help to provide the demand needed for investments in energy infrastructure to be viable, both directly and by generating additional incomes which boost household demand;

5. *Recognizes* that, for the least developed countries to reach Sustainable Development Goal 7, a fundamental challenge will be ensuring universal access also in rural areas; welcomes UNCTAD analysis of the energy-transformation nexus as applied to rural areas, which entails the structural transformation and diversification of rural economies;

6. *Recognizes* that harnessing all available renewable energy resources and adopting renewable energy technologies, including decentralized generation, offer an unprecedented opportunity to bring electricity even to the remotest areas of the least developed countries, but achieving this, and realizing the potential benefits for development, requires a very deliberate effort, especially in terms of developing energy systems that meet producers' needs and adopting complementary policies to promote productive use of electricity;

7. *Recalls* that, in order to reap the potential benefits of technological innovation in the field of energy generation, transmission and distribution through grids, mini-grids and off-grid connections, the least developed countries need additional support from the international community, in terms of trade, finance, technology and capacity development, which matches the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals;

8. *Appreciates* the analysis of gender aspects of energy and development, highlighting that improved energy access can reduce time spent on domestic activities and improve business opportunities and productive capacity for women;

9. *Acknowledges* the vast investment needs of the least developed countries to reach Sustainable Development Goal 7, and welcomes the policy analysis and recommendations on this subject contained in the UNCTAD *The Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access*;

10. *Acknowledges* the need for strengthening good governance at all levels, and enhancing legal frameworks for boosting investment in energy infrastructure;

11. *Welcomes* the operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries in September 2017, and encourages development partners, including the private sector, academia and foundations, to make voluntary contributions to support the Technology Bank in order that it effectively fosters the building of technological capacities by the least developed countries;

12. *Calls on* UNCTAD to strengthen its efforts in the dissemination of its research findings and in policy dialogue with policymakers of the least developed countries and their development partners, and encourages the secretariat to actively assess how *The Least Developed Countries Report* contributes to the organization's long-term efforts to assist the least developed countries, including through the development of follow-up and implementation strategies; calls on the President of the

Trade and Development Board, or his nominee, to present the findings and recommendations of the report during the global conference on Sustainable Development Goal 7, to be held at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific of the United Nations in Bangkok on 21–23 February 2018, and the high-level political forum on sustainable development, to be held on 9–18 July 2018 in New York, at United Nations Headquarters, subject to the availability of resources;

13. *Requests* that future The Least Developed Countries Reports should remain within the mandate of UNCTAD.

Closing plenary meeting
7 February 2018

B. Report of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget

Decision 535 (EX-LXVI)

The Trade and Development Board

1. *Requests* the secretariat to organize an information session to inform member States on the following topics:

(a) Changes to the budgetary process of the United Nations, and the impact on the budgetary process of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget of UNCTAD;

(b) Status report on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019;

2. *Requests* the secretariat to keep member States abreast of the budgetary process on a regular basis and to report back to the Working Party.

Closing plenary meeting
7 February 2018

C. Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy

Decision 536 (EX-LXVI)

The Trade and Development Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of the first session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy, as contained in TD/B/EDE/1/3; takes into consideration the agreed policy recommendations contained therein; and recommends the submission of these outcomes to the appropriate forums;

2. *Decides* to reassess the approach and procedures for preparations for the Intergovernmental Group of Experts and drafting of the discussion-oriented agreed policy recommendations, in alignment with the terms of reference; further requests a report from the secretariat on changes at the midterm review in order that member States can assess progress.

Closing plenary meeting
7 February 2018

D. Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development

Decision 537 (EX-LXVI)

The Trade and Development Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of the first session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development, as contained in TD/B/EFD/1/3; takes into consideration the agreed policy recommendations contained therein; and recommends the submission of these outcomes as the UNCTAD input to the Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up;

2. *Decides* to reassess the approach and procedures for preparations for the Intergovernmental Group of Experts and drafting of the discussion-oriented agreed policy recommendations, in alignment with the terms of reference; further requests a report from the secretariat on changes at the midterm review in order that member States can assess progress.

Closing plenary meeting
7 February 2018

E. Matters requiring action by the Board in the follow-up to the fourteenth session of the Conference

Decision 538 (EX-LXVI)

Modalities for phase II

The Trade and Development Board,

Reaffirming the Nairobi Maafikiano[4] adopted at the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Nairobi,

Recalling paragraph 94 of the Nairobi Maafikiano, which calls for the revitalization of the existing intergovernmental machinery of UNCTAD to better support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda,

1. *Decides* to establish an open-ended Consultative Group of the Whole, which shall be open to the participation of all member States; the Group will meet in three informal, open-ended meetings on the following dates:

(a) 28 February 2018

(b) 22 March 2018

(c) 10 April 2018

2. Meetings will be chaired by the President of the Trade and Development Board or by a facilitator appointed by him; the secretariat will support the meeting and act as an adviser to the Consultative Group of the Whole;

3. The Consultative Group of the Whole shall identify ways and means to revitalize the existing intergovernmental machinery of UNCTAD;

[4] TD/519/Add.2.

4. The Consultative Group of the Whole shall present recommendations resulting from the discussions to the sixty-fifth session of the Trade and Development Board in June 2018 for its consideration and appropriate decision.

Closing plenary meeting
7 February 2018

F. Other action taken by the Board

Report of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget on its seventy-sixth session
(Agenda item 3)

1. The Acting President of the Trade and Development Board informed member States that the seventy-sixth session of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget, originally scheduled for November–December 2017, had been postponed. In its resolution 72/266 of 24 December 2017, the General Assembly approved a change from a biennial to annual budget period and consolidation of the two main UNCTAD programme planning documents into a single document. Therefore, the topics originally planned for a November–December 2017 session of the Working Party would be combined with the topics of the session of the Working Party to be held in December 2018, into a single session, to reflect this change.

2. The Trade and Development Board requested the UNCTAD secretariat to keep member States apprised of changes related to the budgetary process (chapter I, section A). Also, as requested by the representative of one regional group, the UNCTAD secretariat would report back to the Board on the information session on the budgetary process.

Report of the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission
(Agenda item 4)

3. At the third plenary meeting of the session, on 6 February 2018, the Board took note of the report of the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission on its ninth session, as contained in document TD/B/C.II/37, and endorsed the agreed conclusions contained therein.

Report of the Trade and Development Commission
(Agenda item 5)

4. Also at the third plenary meeting of the session, on 6 February 2018, the Board took note of the report of the Trade and Development Commission on its ninth session, as contained in document TD/B/C.I/43, and endorsed the agreed conclusions contained therein.

II. President's summary

A. Opening plenary meeting

5. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD highlighted the innovative selection of topics for UNCTAD flagship reports. In choosing topics, UNCTAD took into account forthcoming issues of interest to be discussed at the Economic and Social Council high-level political forum on sustainable development, as well as those that featured in United Nations discussions on sustainable

development. UNCTAD capacity on the subject matter also influenced topic selection. *The Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access* was expected to inform upcoming deliberations on Sustainable Development Goal 7 at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2018 and would provide guidance to member States on ways to address challenges related to the Goal. More concretely, the report analysed energy as a transformative asset; its policy recommendations would enrich discussions on innovative financing at the high-level political forum. In the financing for development discourse, identifying opportunities for unlocking visible resources could prove promising. For example, by providing official development assistance towards the de-risking of multilateral loans, Sweden had helped significantly in catalysing new loans from the World Bank towards the least developed countries. Unlocking resources from sovereign funds and other new sources should be considered.

6. A new UNCTAD document, entitled "Selected sustainable development trends in the least developed countries 2018", sought to monitor progress towards sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals. Lack of progress in multilateral negotiations, such as those of the World Trade Organization, should not prevent member States from advancing on trade and development issues. In that context, for example, UNCTAD work on the ocean economy and on disciplining fishery subsidies were an important way of fostering progress at the international level.

7. The Director of the UNCTAD Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes stressed the new approach of *The Least Developed Countries Report 2017*, namely linking access to energy to structural transformation in the least developed countries. The report advised the least developed countries to give equal importance to productive and household uses of energy, paying attention to the needs of households and the requirements of producers and public and community institutions. The twin pursuits of structural transformation and the Sustainable Development Goals in the least developed countries would require truly universal access to energy. The UNCTAD secretariat also presented the report's major policy recommendations.

8. The representatives of the following regional groups and delegations then made statements: Pakistan, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; Bangladesh, on behalf of the least developed countries; the Sudan, on behalf of the African Group; Colombia, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; the European Union, on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the United States of America, on behalf of JUSSCANNZ group; Algeria, on behalf of the Arab Group; Djibouti; the Islamic Republic of Iran; Nepal; Senegal; Iraq; Tunisia; Ethiopia; Myanmar; Trinidad and Tobago; Nigeria; the Republic of Korea; Uganda; and the State of Palestine.

9. The representatives of most regional groups and delegations commended the UNCTAD secretariat for the timeliness, relevance and high-quality analysis of the report. They viewed it as an important contribution to the global conference on Sustainable Development Goal 7 in Bangkok in February 2018 and to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in New York in July 2018, as well as to advancing in general on the Sustainable Development Goals. They also called for member States to embrace and implement its policy recommendations. Some regional groups note that flagship reports should focus on the UNCTAD mandate.

10. Many regional groups and delegates advocated renewed mobilization of development finance, in particular to increase official development assistance to the least developed countries in the energy, infrastructure and productive sectors, as well as to strengthen and widen international mechanisms for technology transfer, in the

area of energy, to the least developed countries. It was imperative that member States should respect and enforce commitments made in the Paris Agreement on climate financing for the least developed countries, as well as commitments made under article 66.2 and article 67 of the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights under the World Trade Organization.

11. Several delegations urged the international community to support operationalization of the Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries with effective financing and proper institutional backing.

12. One regional group noted that the tasks of the coming months would be critical in delivering on the revitalization of the UNCTAD intergovernmental machinery, as part of implementation of the Nairobi Maafikiano.

13. Several regional groups and delegates considered increased South–South and triangular cooperation under Sustainable Development Goal 17 as critically needed to accelerate the deployment of energy technologies to the least developed countries. Some delegates provided examples of African regional collaboration on energy. One delegation called on developed countries to increase extrabudgetary funding to support dissemination of UNCTAD research findings and to enhance policy dialogue with policymakers of the least developed countries.

14. The representative of one regional group noted that paragraph 55 (m) of the Nairobi Maafikiano promoted the extensive use of renewable and low-emission energy sources and technologies and diversification of the energy mix in developing countries. He reaffirmed the regional group's commitment to supporting clean and green energy development in the least developed countries and commended UNCTAD for specifically looking into the economics of microgrids. Nevertheless, in addition to official development assistance, increased private finance and the stemming of illicit financial flows would be required.

15. The UNCTAD secretariat responded to the questions of the representative of another regional group on UNCTAD collaboration with other agencies in the course of its work on energy and how the report fit into the long-term plan of UNCTAD for the least developed countries. Some delegates expressed interest on behalf of their respective countries in extending support to the least developed countries in energy and infrastructure. A few delegates highlighted the significant contribution that renewable energy sources could make towards modern energy access in their countries. Another delegate expressed concern about premature de-industrialization in the least developed countries due to lack of access to quality energy.

16. The UNCTAD secretariat then made a brief presentation on the document entitled "Selected sustainable development trends in the least developed countries 2018".

B. Panel discussion: *The Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access*

(Item 2)

17. The Trade and Development Board held a panel discussion on energy for structural transformation and sustainable development in the least developed countries. The panel consisted of the following experts: the Vice-Chair, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change/Special Adviser for Sustainable Development, South Centre; Coordinator, African Trade Policy Centre, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; Director, Sustainable Energy Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe; and Research Officer, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

18. The expert representing the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change/South Centre noted the analysis and unique angle of enquiry of *The Least Developed Countries Report 2017* that contributed to development thinking by delinking access issues from classical, narrow viewpoints. Much work needed to be done on the "what "and "how" of achieving transformational energy access. There was a proliferation of projects, often successful on an individual basis, but the experiences and lessons from them did not inform policymaking at the national or local levels, nor equip the least developed countries with the institutional capacity to implement national access plans. Adequate institutional capacity was also a necessary condition for the least developed countries to realize their "latecomer advantage" in terms of various delivery models, new renewable energy technologies and decentralized systems. He advocated a broadened focus for development assistance on gender and energy to include women's productive roles in agriculture.

19. Emphasizing modern energy as a key element of productive capacities, the expert from the Economic Commission for Africa noted the timeliness of the report. Insufficient and unreliable energy posed a threat to dynamic economic integration. He outlined the potential of the Continental Free Trade Area to enhance transformational energy access in Africa by improving investment incentives, fostering economies of scale through cooperation in infrastructure provision, enabling diversification of the regional energy mix and enhancing regulatory and institutional capacity at the regional and national levels. Certain aspects of the agreement envisaged were particularly favourable to accelerating transformational energy access in Africa: (a) the priority given to liberalization of infrastructure services; (b) the regional institutions to monitor and promote implementation, and facilitate cooperation (such as the African Forum for Utility Regulators, African Business Council and a trade observatory); and (c) the goal of integrating energy infrastructure at the continental level through interconnected regional power pools.

20. The Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa was also expected to deliver positive benefits in access to other modern services (e.g. water) in addition to benefits in increased access to modern energy at a lower cost and a diversified regional energy mix. *The Least Developed Countries Report 2017* served as a means through which emerging continental trade reforms could be assessed on their contribution to transformational energy access.

21. The expert from the Economic Commission for Europe called for an integrated approach to energy access, emphasizing the centrality of Sustainable Development Goal 7 and its multiple interlinkages with other Sustainable Development Goals. The report's findings echoed messages coming out of preparatory work for the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development, which would consider Goal 7. Collaboration and dialogue among regional commissions had enabled a more robust response to access issues in different regions.

22. In highlighting preparatory activities led by the Economic Commission for Europe and outputs for the high-level political forum on sustainable development, he identified some challenges in the approach to access to energy and energy trade from the perspective of the Commission's constituency, including the inadequacy of indicators in use, lack of data and capacity for data collection for improved indicators among member States and deficiencies in traditional utility business models based on the supply of kilowatt hours. He outlined the benefits that could accrue from business models based on the supply of energy services: fostering mutually beneficial patterns of interdependence in the energy sphere; and prioritizing energy efficiency, methane management and elimination of fossil fuel subsidies.

23. The expert from the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development stated that negative impacts of climate change were unfairly distributed, requiring

prioritization of eco-social perspectives in the analysis of transformative change and sustainability. The merits of the approach, detailed in her organization's flagship report, *Policy Innovations for Transformative Change*, were that energy access took on a principal role in assuring social justice as it was central to driving development and as an enabler for other development objectives, including addressing gender inequality. The need to scale up official development assistance and climate finance were among the necessary ingredients for transformational energy access in the least developed countries. She also noted the importance of the participation and active engagement of local populations for the attainment of social justice.

24. During the discussion, some delegates from the least developed countries reiterated the importance of energy as a key element of productive capacities and an enabler of structural transformation. One delegate commended UNCTAD for tackling the theme of energy access and observed that official development assistance had a critical role to play in renewable energy expansion in the least developed countries, as they were constrained by the large upfront capital costs of renewable systems. Another delegate emphasized his country's dependence on fossil fuels and ongoing efforts to diversify the energy mix, including through renewable and nuclear resources. He enquired about the prospects of sustainable exploitation of coal-based generation.

25. One panellist argued that carbon capture and storage technologies could reduce the carbon footprint of coal-based generation, and possibly make it carbon neutral. Adequate financing and carbon pricing mechanisms were prerequisites. He noted that, under the current emotive and politicized climate, possibilities for non-partisan discussions on the economics of nuclear power were constrained.

26. Another panellist noted that the current approach to development thinking and its application in energy access was predominantly focused on supply. He argued for a shift to demand- and service-oriented approaches, which could facilitate decentralization in the least developed countries based on their latecomer advantages and allow them to harness consumers as producers of energy.

27. Another panellist stressed that the fragmentation of energy markets in Africa resulted in a weak energy trade and investment nexus. He recalled the potential emerging opportunities from the Continental Free Trade Area, but cautioned that the gap between plans and implementation, and the challenge of upscaling investment, were yet to be overcome.

28. Another panellist reiterated that energy access had social and political impacts not appropriately addressed by technological solutions alone. She underlined the fundamental role of stakeholder engagement and a process of collective bargaining in mediating between diverse needs, preferences and impacts.

C. Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy
(Item 6)

29. Under the agenda item, the Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy presented the report on the first session.

30. Some regional groups expressed concern regarding the processes for the preparation of the meeting and the production of the agreed policy recommendations. They proposed revisiting the approach of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts to be fully aligned with its terms of reference, as agreed policy recommendations should result from the discussions of experts, coming mainly from country capitals, and be

more technical than political in nature. Some regional groups requested that, for future sessions of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts, holding parallel sessions, involving negotiations, should be avoided. Several regional groups and many delegates recalled the briefings and discussions on how to proceed with preparations prior to the session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts and did not consider the preparation of and discussions on the agreed policy recommendations to be an issue. Several delegates underscored further that the terms of reference proposed that the Intergovernmental Group of Experts should follow standard procedures and methods of work for intergovernmental meetings at UNCTAD. Several delegations noted the difficulties in defining what an expert was and regarding from where they should come, which member States themselves determined.

31. Delegations agreed on the need to clarify whether the issue at stake concerned the modality for the Intergovernmental Group of Experts or the specific content of the agreed policy recommendations.

D. Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development

(Item 7)

32. Under the agenda item, the Chair of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development presented the report on the first session. She highlighted that the importance of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts for developing countries lay in addressing the provision of adequate financing to support efforts at structural transformation under current global economic conditions. Summarizing core areas of contributions and discussion during the first session, she stressed that thorough and high-quality work had resulted in a strong set of agreed policy recommendations that mirrored the contributions.

33. Some regional groups raised procedural concerns similar to those raised in relation to report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-Commerce and the Digital Economy, including that the agreed policy recommendations were not expert driven and that the UNCTAD secretariat had not followed the relevant terms of reference, acting outside its mandate. The UNCTAD secretariat noted that the agenda for the first session had respected the terms of references, which defined areas for discussion in accordance with specific action areas of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The topics addressed were those central to the corresponding chapters of reports of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development. As a major institutional stakeholder of the financing for development follow-up and review process and a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, those areas were within the purview of UNCTAD.

34. Several regional groups and many delegates stressed the importance of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts for them, as a core outcome of the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, as well as their satisfaction with the first session, which had been well attended and covered important areas of work expertly. One regional group welcomed the work of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts as a regular input to the financing for development follow-up and review process and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

35. Several delegates highlighted that the procedures followed for the first session were consistent with the standard procedures and methods of work for intergovernmental meetings at UNCTAD, as requested in the terms of reference of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts, and that the topics for the first session had been circulated to member States and made available at two consecutive briefings for member States in advance of the meeting. Another delegate agreed that the secretariat

had given member States the opportunity to raise concerns prior to the first session and recognized the participation of the experts at the Intergovernmental Group of Experts. Several regional groups and delegates stressed that the procedural concerns raised were unfounded, including those concerning the lack of a mandate, and appealed to the regional groups to raise substantive concerns instead.

E. Closing plenary

36. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD expressed appreciation for the active participation of member States on the critical issue of energy access in the least developed countries. The discussions on the conclusions of *The Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access* had been well attended. There was general satisfaction with the report, topic chosen, original and quality analysis, and suitability and relevance of policy recommendations. Many delegations considered the report a strong contribution to the high-level political forum on sustainable development in July 2018. The process for the high-level political forum had been explained during panel discussion, which had gathered high-level experts in energy for structural transformation and sustainable development. The experts had noted other topics relevant to the debate, such as the institutional framework and capacity-building for successful management of the energy sector, the potential contribution of the Continental Free Trade Area to addressing Africa's energy challenges, as well as the critical contribution that investment in energy efficiency could make to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7. The panel also emphasized that creating synergies between the three pillars of sustainable development was crucial for the environment as well as for the least developed countries.

37. Member States then discussed pending issues related to different agenda items, prior to reaching consensus. With regard to agenda item 8, one regional group indicated that they had not received responses to a substantive proposal shared and thus assumed the proposal was acceptable. Another regional group clarified that silence should not be considered approval.

III. Organizational matters

A. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
(Agenda item 1)

38. At its opening plenary meeting, on 5 February 2018, the Trade and Development Board adopted the provisional agenda for the session as contained in document TD/B/EX(66)/1. Accordingly, the agenda for the executive session was as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
2. The Least Developed Countries Report 2017: Transformational Energy Access
3. Report of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget on its seventy-sixth session
4. Report of the Investment, Enterprise and Development Commission
5. Report of the Trade and Development Commission
6. Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy

7. Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Financing for Development

8. Matters requiring action by the Board in the follow-up to the fourteenth session of the Conference

9. Other business

10. Report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixty-sixth executive session

B. Other business
(Agenda item 9)

39. At the closing plenary meeting, on 7 February 2018, the Acting President the Trade and Development Board presented three issues for consideration under the agenda item. The Acting President:

(a) Reminded delegations that the topics for the multi-year expert meetings in 2018 had been approved in November 2017 by the extended Bureau of the Board.

(b) Noted that the draft provisional agenda of the sixty-fifth session of the Board and the format and outcome of the session was available, as contained in a non-paper dated 7 February 2018, and consisted of a two-day high-level segment, followed by one day of general debate and four days for the regular segment in June 2018, with four days for a resumed session in October 2018.

(c) Noted that the extended Bureau had reached an agreement on the timing of the Commissions and of the resumed sixty-fifth session of the Board and on the dates for the expert meetings, in relation to the calendar of meetings for 2018.

40. The Board decided to include the topics for the multi-year expert meetings in 2018 in the report of its sixty-sixth executive session as an official record (annex I).

41. The Board approved the provisional agenda for its sixty-fifth session (annex II), scheduled to take place in June 2018, with the understanding that members of the extended Bureau would have an opportunity to provide suggestions for the issues to be covered by the annual report of the Secretary-General. As the Bureau had not had an opportunity to consider the type of outcome for the sixty-fifth session, the Board requested that the extended Bureau should consider the matter with a view to reaching an agreement as soon as possible.

42. The Board approved the revised calendar of meetings for 2018, as contained in a non-paper dated 7 February 2018, which took into account the agreement and reflected the dates for other meetings, as well as available slots.[5]

C. Report of the Trade and Development Board on its sixty-sixth executive session
(Agenda item 10)

43. At the closing plenary meeting, the Trade and Development Board authorized the completion of the report after the conclusion of the meeting under the authority of the Acting President.

[5] The official calendar will be issued as document TD/B/INF.238/Rev.1.

Annex I

Topics for the multi-year expert meetings in 2018

1. Topic for the sixth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Transport, Trade Logistics and Trade Facilitation: Sustainable freight transport in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2. Topic for the sixth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Trade, Services and Development: Trade in services for inclusive and sustainable development

3. Topics for the tenth session of the Multi-year expert meeting on Commodities and Development:

   (a) Diversification and value addition

   (b) Recent developments, challenges and opportunities in commodity markets

4. Topic for the sixth session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship for Productive Capacity-building and Sustainable Development: Effectively harnessing science, technology and innovation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

5. Topic for the second session of the Multi-year Expert Meeting on Enhancing the Enabling Economic Environment at All Levels in Support of Inclusive and Sustainable Development, and the promotion of Economic Integration and Cooperation: Adapting industrial policies for economic diversification and structural transformation to a digital world

Annex II

Provisional agenda for the sixty-fifth session of the Trade and Development Board*

1. Procedural matters:

   (a) Election of officers

   (b) Adoption of the agenda and organization of the work of the session

   (c) Adoption of the report on credentials

   (d) Provisional agenda for the sixty-sixth session of the Trade and Development Board

2. High-level segment:

   (a) New ways in which the United Nations could address the crisis of multilateralism and trade and its development machinery and what the contribution of UNCTAD would be

   (b) Industrial policies and productive capacity policies for a digital economy

   (c) Plugging financial leakages and mobilizing domestic and international resources to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals

   (d) Building resilience to multiple shocks affecting people and sustainable development

3. General debate

4. Annual report of the Secretary-General

5. Interdependence and development strategies in a globalized world

6. Economic development in Africa

7. Technology and innovation as effective means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

8. Investment for development

9. Activities of UNCTAD in support of small island developing States and in support of landlocked developing countries and transit developing countries

10. Report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on E-commerce and the Digital Economy

11. Contribution of UNCTAD to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020

12. Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people

13. Matters requiring action by the Board in the follow-up to the fourteenth session of the Conference

14. Evaluation and review of UNCTAD implementation of the quadrennial conference outcome

15. UNCTAD contributions to the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields

* Agenda items 4 through 19 fall under the regular segment of the session.

16. Institutional, organizational, administrative and related matters:

    (a) Report by the Chair of the Advisory Body set up in accordance with paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action on the implementation of courses by the secretariat in 2017–2018 and their relevant impact; and the appointment of members of the Advisory Body

    (b) Designation of intergovernmental bodies for the purposes of rule 76 of the rules of procedure of the Board

    (c) Designation of non-governmental organizations for the purposes of rule 77 of the rules of procedure of the Board

    (d) Review of the calendar of meetings

    (e) Membership of the Working Party

    (f) Review of the lists of States contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 1995 (XIX)

    (g) Administrative and financial implications of the actions of the Board

17. Provisional agenda of the sixty-seventh executive session of the Trade and Development Board

18. Other business

19. Adoption of the report

Annex III

Attendance*

1. Representatives of the following States members of the Trade and Development Board attended the session:

Albania
Algeria
Argentina
Austria
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Benin
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)
Brazil
Brunei Darussalam
Bulgaria
Burundi
Chad
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Côte d'Ivoire
Djibouti
Egypt
Estonia
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Gabon
Georgia
Germany
Guatemala
Guinea
Honduras
India
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Iraq
Japan
Jordan
Kuwait
Lesotho
Madagascar
Mauritius
Mexico
Mongolia
Montenegro
Morocco
Mozambique
Myanmar
Namibia
Nepal
Nicaragua
Nigeria
Oman
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Republic of Korea
Republic of Moldova
Romania
Russian Federation
Senegal
Serbia
Sierra Leone
Slovenia
South Africa
Spain
Sudan
Swaziland
Sweden
Syrian Arab Republic
Thailand
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Uganda
United States of America
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
Viet Nam
Yemen
Zambia

* This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/EX(66)/INF.1.

2. Representatives of the following non-member observer State attended the session:

State of Palestine

3. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
European Union
League of Arab States
Organization of Islamic Cooperation
South Centre

4. The following United Nations organs, bodies and programmes were represented at the session:

Economic Commission for Africa
International Trade Centre

5. The following specialized agencies and related organizations were represented at the session:

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

6. The following non-governmental organizations were represented at the session:

General category

Engineers of the World
International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development
International Network for Standardization of Higher Education Degrees